



## SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

May 16, 2006

Dr. John Yellen  
Director for Archaeology, Archaeometry, and Systematic Collections  
National Science Foundation  
4201 Wilson Blvd, Rm 995  
Arlington VA 22330

Re: The Promise and Challenge of Archaeological Data Integration

Dear John:

With this letter I would like to convey the Society for American Archaeology's (SAA) endorsement of the recent report, entitled "The Promise and Challenge of Archaeological Data Integration," that was the outcome of an NSF-sponsored workshop devoted to developing a vision for a cyberinfrastructure for archaeology.

SAA is an international organization that, since its founding in 1934, has been dedicated to research about and interpretation and protection of the archaeological heritage of the Americas. With almost 7,000 members, the Society represents professional archaeologists in colleges and universities, museums, government agencies, and the private sector. SAA has members in all 50 states as well as many other nations around the world.

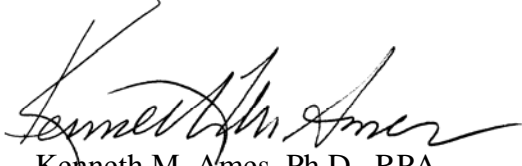
SAA does not endorse specific proposals; SAA does endorse concepts that positively affect the archaeological record, broadly conceived. The Society is strongly committed to the preservation and sharing of archaeological data for the benefit of science and society. This commitment is woven through the Society's Principles of Archaeological Ethics (<http://www.saa.org/aboutSAA/ethics.html>). The Society believes development of a cyberinfrastructure for archaeology, as outlined in the report, is an essential step to that end. Over the last century, archaeologists have amassed large amounts of irreplaceable unpublished or gray literature reports, databases, maps, and images that are critical for understanding human history and that can contribute unique scientific data to many other important scientific topics, such as long-term socioecological stability and change. It is essential that we, as a profession, find ways of assuring our texts, data, and images are preserved in the long run and that they will be available in a form that can meet current and future needs of both focused and synthetic archaeological research. To do this, we must participate in developing the technologies that allow full documentation, stable storage, and integrated access to these resources in ways that can maximize their availability and scientific utility.

The report outlines an initial vision for a cyberinfrastructure for archaeology that begins addressing our pressing needs in a way that not only takes advantage of informatics developments in other disciplines but that also recognizes unsolved problems that archaeology presents. Although technological and sociological challenges exist, SAA believes the discipline is prepared to embrace a well designed cyberinfrastructure, both because of our ethical obligations to the archaeological record and because it would so powerfully advance our abilities to learn from and more effectively build on the vast amount

of archeological work that has been accomplished. We further believe these developments will, in turn, lead to great improvements in existing data collection and data documentation procedures.

For this reason, the Society for American Archaeology strongly endorses “The Promise and Challenge of Archaeological Data Integration” and urges the National Science foundation to fund initiatives that can make this vision a reality. As the nation’s leading professional organization of archaeologists, SAA is prepared to take the necessary steps to foster the development of such a cyberinfrastructure and to work with the relevant parties to make it succeed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth M. Ames". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K'.

Kenneth M. Ames, Ph.D., RPA  
President

cc: Mark Weiss, National Science Foundation  
Keith Kintigh, Arizona State University  
Dean Snow, Pennsylvania State University